

JSCP and the President

Although all of these disputes and their motivation were well known at the level of the Air Staff War Planners I was dealing with, there was essentially no public discussion of them at all. The one exception was a brief account in Maxwell Taylor's book The Uncertain Trumpet which he published in 1960 after his retirement as Chief of Staff of the Army. Since I cannot expect it to be easily credible that issues of such import could have taken the precise form I have described - let alone for the considerations I have mentioned - I will quote the corresponding passage of Taylor's account:

The concern over the snowballing of defense costs led to the next major conflict revolving around the military strategy. This clash occurred in the spring of 1956 in connection with the drafting by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the "Joint Strategic Objectives Plan" (JSOP 60) for Fiscal Year 1960. This is the midrange planning document which undertakes to estimate force requirements four years in advance. In the short time since the Ramey meeting, Admiral Radford had become convinced that it would be financially impossible to continue the military programs as planned and that the economies should be made at the expense of the conventional (nonatomic) forces. In particular, he was determined to eliminate from military planning any consideration of the possibility of a conventional war with the Soviet Union. The issue took the form of an argument over the definition of general war and the extent to which the armed forces should count on the use of atomic weapons. I proposed language which would recognize the possibility of some limitations on the use of atomic weapons, particularly in the initial stages of a conflict with the USSR, and the consequent need for conventional forces of significant size. Admiral Radford and the other Chiefs opposed this change, which, if accepted, would have justified greater expenditures for nonatomic forces. In the end, my view was overruled and the definition of general war established as a conflict in which the U.S. and USSR would be directly involved and in which atomic weapons would be used at the outset. The same decision authorized the armed forces to count on the use of atomic weapons not only from the outset of general war but also in situations short of general war when required by military considerations. In effect, these actions ruled out consideration of a conventional conflict of any sort with the USSR and weakened the case for conventionally armed forces in limited wars.

It should be noted that in Taylor's account of this dispute he describes the definition of general war as being determined in connection with the Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP-60). If that is correct, it would imply that the definition of general war actually appeared in the JSOP in 1956, whereas it did not in later editions of this document (which was annually available to the civilian part of the Department of Defense). Actually, however, it is more likely that Taylor's account simply reflects his own continuation of the JCS' "cover and deception plan" concealing the very existence of a Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), since nowhere in this book does he refer to the JSCP. It may have been unprecedented, in 1960, for Taylor even to mention the JSOP in public print, but in the three places where he does (pages 22, 38 and 85-87), he describes the structure of planning in such a way that it would be appropriate to mention the JSCP as well yet he refrains from doing so, nor does he mention the JSCP at any other point in the book.

The significance of this point is twofold: a) It underlines the "sensitivity" of the JSCP, about which Taylor remained reticent in 1960 even while being unprecedently forthcoming about so much else; b) his reticence conceals from the reader the fact that as of 1959-1960 and later - and almost surely, in the 1956 period of which Taylor was writing - the nature of this dispute, its resolution in connection with the definition of general war, and the very document in which this resolution occurred, were all being deliberately kept from any civilian authority even within the Department of Defense.

Thus, without the knowledge of civilian officials in the Department of Defense or the Commander in Chief in the White House, let alone Congress, the budgetary struggle among the services had led as early as 1956 to a highly restrictive definition of general war in the basic war plan which underlay annual war planning at all levels of command, such that the dividing line between "limited war" and all-out general nuclear war was drawn between the absence or presence of a significant number of Soviet troops in conflict with American or allied troops.

As a footnote to later events, I can't resist mentioning two incidents in Taylor's narrative following this passage. Taylor mentions, "One characteristic of this period was the effort of the Department of Defense and the State Department to keep secret the struggle which was going on within the Joint Chiefs of Staff over Massive Retaliation and related issues."

(Page 43) The Army staff had written a paper entitled "The National Military Program." Although it was "an unclassified document," Taylor was blocked from writing an article presenting these views in Foreign Affairs. For varying reasons both the State Department and the Defense Department refused to clear the article for public release; Taylor finally, four years later, presents it as an appendix to his book: "It is of interest now primarily as an indication of the efforts at the time to conceal the existence of the deep schism in the JCS and the growing doubts about Massive Retaliation." Meanwhile, after the decision described above on the definition of general war, "with this victory to support his position, Admiral Radford in July 1956, led a major effort to cut the conventional forces and in particular the Army. He introduced into the JCS the most drastic proposal of the New Look, which if adopted would have caused a complete revision of our force structure in the next four years." (Page 39)

no P - The Radford proposal would have cut Army deployments in Europe and Asia down to small atomic task forces, with the Army in the United States to be greatly reduced; fighting limited wars would be the task of Air and Naval forces, with the Marines doing the ground fighting. Taylor opposed this policy in a session of the JCS on July 9, 1956, as "an unacceptable military program for the United States," but he got no support from the other Chiefs and he left the meeting "feeling sure that the usual four-to-one split was about to be carried to the Secretary of Defense, where my case would be lost."

"That might well have resulted but for help from an unexpected quarter. On July 13, 1956, the New York Times carried an article by the late Anthony Leviero, its Washington correspondent, with the headline, "Radford Seeking 800,000 Man Cut." The article went on to describe with reasonable accuracy parts of the proposal which had just been considered in closed session by the Joint Chiefs.

of Staff. It appeared that Leviero had either benefited from a deliberate leak of information or succeeded in putting together bits and pieces of facts gleaned from contacts with individuals who knew something about what was up. In any case, he had done a very shrewd job of guessing the nature of some of the events taking place in the highest military circles.

This so-called Radford leak created a tremendous hullabaloo in the Department of Defense, in Washington generally, and also had its repercussions abroad. An immediate investigation was started to try to determine the source. The investigation brought nothing to light to permit the identification or punishment of offenders, if such there were. Abroad, the leak was most disturbing to some of our allies. Chancellor Adenauer in particular was very much concerned about the reported proposal to reduce Army forces in Europe. He dispatched at once General Adolf Heusinger, Chief of the German Armed Forces, to discuss the matter with key Defense Department officials. In the meetings following his arrival in Washington, General Heusinger made a very eloquent argument for the indispensable nature of a strong ground shield in Europe as a part of the over-all strategic deterrent. Secretary Wilson assured him that no significant reduction in our European deployments was intended, so that he was able to return to Germany with a reassuring report for the Chancellor.

As a result of this publicity, Admiral Radford's proposal was withdrawn from the JCS and all copies of it in written form were recalled to the office of origin. The Critical danger to our overseas deployments and limited-war forces was laid for the moment. It was to reappear, however, a year later in slightly attenuated form in the Wilson-Radford program for the military forces in the period 1957 to 1961.

(After the publicity given to the nature of the leak process in the last few years, it may be left as an exercise to the reader to guess from what office, and by whose authority, the dastardly "deliberate leak" had issued).

Thus, when circumstances in 1914 persuaded the Czar that he should execute mobilization plans against Austria he was quickly persuaded by his military advisors that it was necessary to implement full mobilization plans against both Germany and Austria (even though Russia had no desire to be at war with Germany, or even to threaten Germany). And this Russian maneuver had the predictable consequence of causing the Kaiser to implement Germany's single war plan, which called, first, for defeating the French, so as to be able subsequently to shift troops east to the Russian front. Since, for speed, the attack on France moved through Belgium, this "technical" aspect of the rigid plan had the diplomatic effect of calling British alliance commitments into play in defense of Belgian neutrality...

In 1960, of the various "options" (actually reflecting only varying kinds of ready nuclear vehicles, depending on amount of alert time) that comprised what was really a single war strategy of obliterating a single, fixed target system, none of these "options" omitted, as targets: a) Russian cities; b) Russian command posts; c) Eastern European nations; or d) (in the Pacific Command) China.